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Performing mime in the *Idylls* of Theocritus:

Metrical Mime, Drama and the 'Everyday' in Theocritus, Idylls 2, 14, 15

***Abstract**: Idylls 2, 14, 15 have been ear-marked by scholars for their overt relationship with ancient mime, and they have long carried the label 'urban mimes', but what is mime, let alone 'urban mime', and what is Theocritus' relationship with the poorly preserved art-form of mime? This chapter uses Idylls 2, 14, 15, alongside Theocritus' other work, as well as that of his artistic contemporaries and predecessors, to address these questions. Firstly (Section A), there is an exploration of the definition of mime and its features in the Idylls of Theocritus – what do we understand by the term mime, and how has it been applied to Theocritus. This leads (Section B) to a consideration of the influence on Theocritus of another performance-rooted art-form: Greek drama, both comedy and tragedy, and the notable overlap between comedy and mime. Next (Section C) we turn to the earlier tradition of mime, and the work of Sophron, who shares with Theocritus a Syracusan heritage, and whose art-form of mime was a performance-based art. From this position, we can look (Section D) to the way that mime is re-appropriated in a Hellenistic frame by Theocritus and most notably by his contemporary Herodas in his Mimiambs, which are a Hellenistic hybrid of mime and iambic verse. Both Herodas and Theocritus use mime to give an active voice to female protagonists. Finally (Section E), we can compare what role the subsequent reception of Theocritus' poetry has played in reshaping ancient and contemporary attitudes to Theocritus' Idylls and his relationship with mime. By placing the Idylls of Theocritus in this set of historical and contemporary Hellenistic contexts (from Sophron to Herodas) we are in the best position to view Idylls 2, 14 and 15 and the wider Theocritean corpus, in light of our understanding of mime as a performance art. This also enables us to start tracing the ways that mime plays a role across the Theocritean corpus, and as such it serves as a fruitful area for future Theocritean research.*

A. Identifying mime and mime in Theocritus

There is a slight tension observable in recent scholarship on Theocritus that both wants to view his *Idylls* as a unity, while also acknowledging and embracing the enormous variety in his output.[1] This is demonstrated by the very existence of a chapter in this volume that is dedicated solely to mime and Theocritus, and which focuses on *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15. Prior to the 21st c. these three *Idylls* were classed by scholars as 'urban mimes' due to their dramatic setting in the city, and the late 20th c. saw two independent, highly influential monographs by Joan Burton (1995) and Richard Hunter (1996) which explored, and thoroughly enriched, our understanding of the presence and effects of mime in these *Idylls*.[2] However, this chapter will avoid this label of 'urban mime', because it risks imposing unnecessary generic restrictions on

[1] Recent monographs seek to draw the *Idylls* together e.g. Kyriakou (2018) on Theocritean aesthetics, Payne (2007) on Theocritus' creation of a fictional world in the *Idylls*. The edited volume of Harder, Regtuit and Wakker (1996) provided a much-needed study of the variety across Theocritus. Cf. Segal (1981, 207) who had earlier argued for the unity of the bucolic *Idylls*: "the bucolic *Idylls* illuminate one another in their multiple interconnections of theme and verbal echo, and they should no longer be treated as discrete, unrelated poems."

[2] The so-called 'urban mimes' of Theocritus are still identified as *Idylls* 2, 14 15 by the majority of scholars: e.g. Acosta-Hughes (2012, 396); Hunter (1999, 8); Burton (1995, Appendix 1) includes only *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 for translation as 'urban mimes'; Rosenmeyer (1969, 28) refers to them as 'city mimes'. Cf. Panayotakis (2014, 379) includes *Idyll* 3 alongside *Idylls* 2, 14, 15.

the variety and richness of Theocritus' *Idylls* and the way they engage with mime. As we shall see, other *Idylls* also engage with mime, but this varies in form and intensity across the *Idylls*.

The designation of *Idylls* 2, 14, 15 as the mimes of Theocritus is done based on a number of factors: **definitional**, **contextual** and **content-based**. We shall explore each of these in the course of the chapter. **Definitional** relates to the questions: what is mime, and what did scholars understand by an "urban mime" of Theocritus? **Contextual** factors situate Theocritus *Idylls* 2, 14, 15 in the historical contexts of mime as well as comic drama, tragic drama, epigram. We must also consider the contemporary Hellenistic contexts of Herodas' *Mimiambs* and the continuing development of mime in Hellenistic literature and performance. Throughout the chapter we will look to the **content** and style of *Idylls* 2, 14, 15 that are noted for their connections to mime, as well as seeking echoes of mime in Theocritus' wider corpus.

Indeed, the very concept of connecting mime with Theocritus stems from ancient scholars who identified connections between *Idylls* 2 and 15 and specific mimes of Sophron, who was the most famous composer of mime from 5th c. BCE Syracuse.[3] By comparison, scholars note that *Idyll* 14 is characterised by an overt cross-over between mime and Greek comic drama, and it makes great use of proverbs, which is a characteristic feature of Sophron's mime.[4] As ever with Theocritus the richness, complexity and creativity of his work risks being obscured by imposing rigid generic lines onto them. Therefore, this chapter steps over these lines, by acknowledging the connection between Theocritus and mime across the *Idylls*, and by focusing on *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 because this is where most scholarly attention has been directed, and more importantly this is where we see overt engagement with mime, but this always occurs alongside other creative art-forms such as drama, epigram and epic. Indeed, the overlap between Greek comic drama and our understanding of mime is particularly striking (discussed in Section B). And so in order to isolate the influence of mime within the *Idylls* it is all the more important that we focus on the three *Idylls* where that influence is clearest to see.

We can begin with the summary of what we understand by the art-form of mime, which Theocritus would have drawn on in the creation of his *Idylls*. Jeffrey Rusten & Ian Cunningham in their recent Loeb edition that surveys all the remnants of mime (2014, 183) define mime as follows:

> "The Greek mime was a popular entertainment in which one actor or a small group portrayed a situation from everyday life in the lower levels of society, concentrating on depiction of character rather than on plot. Situations were

[3] The scholiast on *Idyll* 2.60 declares: τὴν δὲ τῶν φαρμάκων ὑπόθεσιν ἐκ τῶν Σώφρονος μίμων μεταφέρει· 'He takes the plot of the drugs from the mimes of Sophron'. The Argument to *Idyll* 2 notes: τὴν δὲ Θεστυλίδα ἀπειροκάλως ἐκ τῶν Σώφρονος μετήνεγκε μίμων 'he transferred Thestylis ignorantly [or, tastelessly] from the mimes of Sophron'. The Argument to *Idyll* 15 states: παρέπλασε δὲ τὸ ποιημάτιον ἐκ τῶν παρὰ Σώφρονι Ἴσθμια θαμένων, 'He fashioned the poem from *the Women viewing the Isthmia* in Sophron.' (text & transl. from Rusten & Cunningham 2014). See further in Section C below.

[4] Hunter (1996, 110-38) and see Section B below. Demetrius (*On Style* 156) comments on Sophron's prolific use of proverbs.

> occasionally borrowed from comedy. Indecency was frequent. … The normal vehicle was prose and the spoken language."

This gives a starting point, but any discussion of mime and Theocritus is complicated by three factors: **(1.) There is very little continuous text and direct material of mime** extant now, and indeed *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 of Theocritus alongside the *Mimiambs* of his contemporary Herodas provide us with key information about mime. Therefore, we must be careful to avoid circular argument with regard to Theocritus' *Idylls*.[5] **(2.) The tradition of mime** goes back at least to Sophron in the 5th c. BCE but it extends forward into Theocritus' own age and on into the Roman period. Therefore, we are dealing with a developing art-form, not a static one. **(3.) This development of mime** in the Hellenistic period sees the adaptation of mime into a literary context alongside performance, and these performances probably took place before Ptolemy II Philadelphus at the royal court, as discussed by Eric Csapo.[6] There are fragments of other mimes from the Hellenistic period, but these present the same debates among scholars over the idea of literary mime vs. performance.[7] Within this chapter, I will be taking the same attitude as I have taken elsewhere to do with the Hellenistic response to Greek drama:[8] namely, there are developing and evolving traditions of the textual reception and performance of mime occurring in tandem during the lifetime of Theocritus. This makes it all the more likely that these *Idylls* were performed out loud, a view held by Eric Csapo, and Benjamin Acosta-Hughes, who rightly warns against anachronism in assuming that 'literary mime' means poetry which was intended to be read. I would like to add that neither should we underestimate the sophistication that is possible in performances.[9] By contrast, Karl-Heinz Stanzel argues that Theocritus and Herodas draw on the performance genres of drama and mime in order only to evoke a performance context, and that these Hellenistic works were not created for an audience of spectators, i.e. these Hellenistic works were not intended for performance.[10] I would agree that Theocritus draws on mime and comic and tragic drama in his *Idylls* to relay the effect of a particular performance mode on his original audience. By so doing Theocritus injects an element of the real and the contemporary effects of mime into his *Idylls*, and these effects would suggest these *Idylls* were performed.

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[5] Panayotakis (2014, 379) provides an engaging discussion on the difficulty of defining mime; Cf. Zanker (2009, 40, n. 2) in his discussion of Herodas' *Mimiambs*.

[6] Csapo (2010, 178) summarises as follows: 'Alexander's successors appear to have adopted the fashion set by the Macedonian court for the cultivation of dramatic skills, for developing personal relationships with dramatic artists, and for giving dramatic entertainments a central place within the social life of the court, and particularly within the entertainments of large formal banquets.'

[7] For the extant fragments of mime from the Hellenistic period onward see Cunningham (2004) and Rusten & Cunningham (2014). Chesterton (2016, 199) compares literary mime vs. performance mime. Panayotakis (2014, 382) neatly sums up the issues faced by scholars, noting that mime: 'becomes difficult to pin down, because it may have signified not only unscripted spectacles by solo performers of music and role playing but also scripted poems of high sophistication.'

[8] Miles (2016).

[9] Csapo (2010); Acosta-Hughes (2012, 408): 'The assumption that the originally Sicilian genre on arrival in a more sophisticated Alexandria evolved into poetry marked, as it were, for performance that is intended in fact to be read is fraught with problems and a good deal of anachronism.'

[10] Stanzel (1998, 162) concludes that both Herodas and Theocritus employ 'eine eher quasidramatische Konzeption' ('a rather quasi-dramatic approach').

Now that we are aware of the difficulties and disagreements of scholars when it comes to mime, an art-form that Costas Panayotakis rightly labels "elusive",[11] we can turn to *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15. For, these three *Idylls* contain the strongest evidence for the influence of mime specifically –as opposed to comic drama more generally– and as such it is the hardest to refute. I begin with a short summary of each mime before we discuss the features that have been seen in them as drawing on ancient mime:

Idyll 2: is a monologue in which a woman Simaetha is at home and alone, angry and hurt following her treatment by Delphis, a man who slept with Simaetha for a while, but has now moved on to another woman or man. Simaetha, takes action to assuage her anger and confusion by using magic on Delphis. In the course of the *Idyll* we learn the back-story as Simaetha performs the magic rituals, and so we come to know much about the thoughts, motivations, desires and fears of the character of Simaetha.

Idyll 14: is a dialogue between Thyonichus and his friend Aeschinas, who is resentful and angry with his girl Cynisca. In the course of the dialogue Aeschinas' character emerges as we learn that, in a fit of jealousy, he physically assaulted Cynisca at a symposium. Just like Simaetha, Aeschinas' mood compels him to take action, but in this case he has decided to enlist as a mercenary, providing a pre-echo of the concept of *militia amoris* in Roman elegy. As with Simaetha, the character of Aeschinas emerges as the *Idyll* develops. The ending is most notable for the advice Thyonichus offers Aeschinas: Aeschinas should seek employment with Ptolemy II Philadelphus. The *Idyll* ends on this note of open praise to Ptolemy, which is unexpected compared to the opening, where the focus was on the personal matters of Aeschinas. Therefore, the influences of mime help to make this a surprise ending that heaps praise on Ptolemy, Theocritus' patron.

Idyll 15: is another dialogue, this time between friends Gorgo and Praxinoa, who are women with young families. The dramatic setting is at first Praxinoa's home, where Gorgo comes to visit and to persuade Praxinoa to join her in going to the Adonis festival. Therefore, unlike *Idylls* 2 and 14, our characters end up being on the move, and we are taken with them out of the domestic family home onto the busy streets of Alexandria where they meet other characters. This is an unexpected move, but the surprises do not stop there. Once Gorgo and Praxinoa arrive, they (and we the audience) witness a song to Adonis composed in honour of Queen Arsinoe II, Ptolemy's wife, which Gorgo then praises. Therefore, like *Idyll* 14 we find the ending of *Idyll 15* places the audience in an unexpected position, one that was not signalled at the start, and where mime provides a recognisable and down-to-earth frame of reference. The surprise ending again presents another favourable image of Ptolemaic rule.

The complexity of each of these *Idylls* is clear from these summaries, and the influences go far beyond mime (see Sections B, C and D below). Nonetheless, these three *Idylls* have in common a preponderance of characteristics that are thought to draw on the art-form of ancient mime. These are: **(1.) The urban setting**, which is, therefore, a very contemporary and Hellenistic setting, and one of direct relevance to Theocritus' original audiences. This

[11] Panayotakis (2014, 378).

aspect is in oppositional tendency with the Bucolic *Idylls*, whose setting is in the countryside. However, this does not prevent tropes from the urban being imported into the bucolic, e.g. in *Idyll* 3 where the urban-based scene of *paraclausithyron* is restaged outside a countryside cave. This reveals already the importance of looking for mime beyond the so-called 'urban mimes'.[12] **(2.) The 'everyday' subject matter** of Hellenistic men and women. This includes their style of speech, the gap between epic hexameter and 'everyday' content, and particularly **the use of proverbs** which is prevalent in these *Idylls,* especially *Idyll* 14,[13] and which Demetrius (*On Style* 156) connects specifically with Sophron: 'almost every proverb can be collected from his [Sophron's] plays.' σχεδόν τε πάσας ἐκ τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ τὰς παροιμίας ἐκλέξαι ἐστίν. We shall return to the significance of this last point in connection with mime in Section C below. **(3.) A focus on character** rather than plot, which is a feature of Sophron's mime.[14] This is visible from the summaries of *Idylls* 2, 14, 15, but it is evident elsewhere, e.g. *Idyll* 4 and the gossipy conversation between the contrasting characters of Corydon and Battus, which bears striking resemblances to Gorgo and Praxinoa's exchanges in *Idyll* 15. **(4.) Female voices are protagonists** present in *Idylls* 2 and 15 as direct speakers, and most notably in no other of Theocritus' *Idylls,* aside from *Idyll* 27, which is not thought to be by Theocritus.[15] Elsewhere in the *Idylls* we have only reported female speech, thoughts and emotional reactions (e.g. *Idyll* 14). However, it is only in *Idylls 2 and 15* that we hear female voices expressing their thoughts, joys, emotions and sexual experiences as constructed by Theocritus. The added significance here is that in the mimes of Sophron and subsequent mime female roles were played by female performers: μῖμοι γυναικεῖοι ('female mime').[16] This is not what occurs in Greek comic drama, where all parts are played by men. On the significance of a female voice in mime, we should note now that the *Mimiambs* of Herodas also give voice to a variety of female protagonists (discussed below, Section D).

By invoking the performance of mime in these *Idylls* Theocritus creates a more powerful image of realism in the construction of his female speakers. Equally notable is the link in *Idylls* 2 and 15 between female voice and urban/domestic settings; Simaetha is alone in her home, while Praxinoa and Gorgo leave Praxinoa's house and journey to the festival of Adonis in Alexandria. In the world of Theocritus' *Idylls,* life within the city is where women's voices are present and active. Conversely male voices, including expression of desire and sexual frustrations, dominate in the pastoral, ethereal, divinely populated environment of the countryside. It is all the more notable, therefore, that it is precisely *Idylls* 2 and 15 that the ancient scholia cite for their apparent connections with specific mimes of Sophron (as noted above). In the case of *Idyll* 15 we have the contrasting pair of the flamboyant Gorgo playing against the more practical

[12] *Paraclausithyron* (παρακλαυσίθυρον): 'a lament before a door', refers to a man locked outside the house of the girl or woman he sexually desires. Notably the earliest attestation of the word is in Plutarch, *Moralia* 753a-b. The focus on a *paraclausithyron* as a separate, self-contained scene is first attested in Hellenistic poetry, including Theocritus *Idyll* 3 and the epigrams of Asclepiades (e.g. *AP* 5.145, and cf. 5.64).
[13] Hopkinson (2015, 192) notes the preponderance of proverbs in *Idyll* 14: lines 9, 23, 38, 43, 46, 49.
[14] Discussed e.g. by Rusten & Cunningham (2014, 183), as quoted above.
[15] Hopkinson (2015, 373); Gow (1950, 485).
[16] Hordern (2004) suggests that the two types of mime: μῖμοι γυναικεῖοι ('female mime') and μῖμοι ἀνδρεῖοι ('male mime'), go back to Sophron. Cf. Plato's *Republic* 451C where Socrates separates the performance of ἀνδρεῖον δρᾶμα …. τὸ γυναικεῖον ('male drama … female drama').

Praxinoa discussing their lives and providing a running commentary on their experience of the festival of Adonis. Meanwhile in *Idyll* 2 we have the lonesome Simaetha at home, whose isolation and (fictional) privacy provides the perfect environment for the audience of *Idyll* 2 to listen in on her emotive expressions, her sexual desires, frustrations and arousal.

However, the four features listed above are by no means limited to *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15, and the effects of mime are felt across the *Idylls.* Sometimes this is easier to detect than others; in the case of *Idyll* 3 it has a countryside (not urban) setting, but it involves a comical *paraclausithyron* taking place in front of a cave, and for Richard Hunter, despite its rural setting *Idyll* 3: 'certainly evokes related traditions of quasi-dramatic solo performances, though ones not specifically linked to Sicily.'[17] Costas Panayotakis even includes *Idyll* 3 among his designation of 'urban mimes' alongside *Idylls* 2, 14, 15, as further indication of the generic slippage detectable in Theocritus' *Idylls.*[18] We very quickly reach the limits of the label 'urban mime' when exploring the role of mime in Theocritus.

Already we can see that the relationship between mime and Theocritus is as complex and interwoven as any of Theocritus' engagements with other literary genres. Indeed, Richard Hunter goes as far as to declare: 'Idylls 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 14 and 15 are "mimes", that is "playlets" set either in the town or the countryside with more than one character, though Idylls 2 and 3 have only one speaker', and Hunter goes on to describe *Idyll* 6 as a 'rustic mime', and then to draw parallels between 'the "mime" of *Idyll* 3 and *Idyll* 11, with its song of the Cyclops Polyphemus'.[19] Hunter is right to warn us against attempting to pigeonhole an *Idyll* of Theocritus within one particularly literary genre, but quite what is understood here by 'mime' is unclear. What even this short summary shows us is that the influence and role of mime varies hugely across the *Idylls*. Poulheria Kyriakou's recent analysis of the *Idylls* is another case in point; the summary of *Idyll* 9 begins: 'The poem begins in dramatic mode, as a mime…' which indicates a recognition of mime, but this is left as a tantalising aside, and quite what distinction is being drawn between drama and mime is not discussed.[20] Similarly, Kyriakou's discussion of *Idyll* 10, starts: 'This mime, neither bucolic nor urban', but as with Hunter, what the designation mime actually means is unclear.[21] This trend continues to the present moment (2018), as seen in Sofia Belioti's loose categorisation of *Idylls*: 'that combine mimelike speech by characters with a narrative framing (2, 6, 7, 11, 14, 15).'[22]

It is certainly true that many of the *Idylls* involve direct speakers in dialogue or monologue, which evokes performance-based genres such as drama and mime, but it is important for us to be clear what weight these different terms hold. To this end, the rest of the chapter focuses on the *Idylls* where mime is most clearly at work, namely *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15. My line has been to start with the concrete, and then move out to the less overt, stable connections to mime. Otherwise, the term "mime" risks just being a homonym for "dramatic", as seen from the

[17] Hunter (1999, 10).
[18] Panayotakis (2014, 379).
[19] Hunter (1999, 4).
[20] Kyriakou (2018, 155).
[21] *Ibid*. 43.
[22] Belioti (2018, 6).

scholars above, and this is something I wish to avoid in the chapter. Rather our aim is to isolate features specific to mime that Theocritus draws on in his *Idylls*. Most notably we see that the influence of mime is at its most striking alongside other artistic forms such as tragedy, comedy and epigram, as we shall now discuss.

B. Mime, Drama and Epigram

The four characteristics of mime in Theocritus, which were listed in the previous section (the urban, the everyday, the focus on character and female voices), are not features unique to mime. They are also familiar in comic drama, both Hellenistic and of the preceding period, which scholarship has noted.[23] Many of the *Idylls* reflect the influence of Greek drama, for example, Epicharmus, a Syracusan comic dramatist from 5th c. BCE composed a *Cyclops* that is compared with *Idylls* 6 & 11, and an *Amycus.* The latter is treated in *Idyll* 22 and Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, where Amycus is a son of Poseidon defeated by Polydeuces in a boxing match. The echoes of comic drama are also at work in *Idyll* 4, in which Battus and Corydon share local gossip and conversation that colour the pastoral setting with everyday matters. There is even a moment of comic action as Corydon helps Battus to remove a thorn from below his ankle (4.51). By comparison, the contest of *Idyll* 5 between Lacon and Comatas devolves quickly to comic insults, mockery and sexually explicit language that recalls a comic agon (e.g. Aristophanes' *Knights* or *Clouds*). Indeed, Thomas Rosenmeyer long ago summarised Theocritus, *Idyll* 5 in the following manner: 'the spirit of which is, in large part, downright Aristophanic, tempered with flashes of humility.'[24] All of which reflects the diversity of ways that scholars have observed Greek comedy at work in the *Idylls* of Theocritus. Overall, the role of other performance-based art-forms is being increasingly acknowledged in Theocritus' *Idylls.* Harder, Regtuit and Wakker *Drama and Performance in Hellenistic Poetry* (2018) is an important case in point, but the attention to mime and Theocritus in this important volume is still minimal.

As well as Greek comedy, it is important to consider Hellenistic epigram, particularly the work of Asclepiades of Samos, with its erotic, desire-filled subject matter, including *paraclausithyron* (5.164; 5.189), use of humour and everyday dialogue. All these features have been noted for their affinities with our understanding of mime (e.g. the *paraclausithryon* in *Idyll* 3 discussed in Section A).[25] Theocritus' own awareness of the work of Asclepiades is evident from the favourable mention he gives to Asclepiades in *Idyll* 7.39-40, as well as Philitas, an epigrammist and literary predecessor of both Theocritus and Asclepiades. We can compare

[23] E.g. Kutzko (2008) discusses comic metadrama in *Idyll* 15 and Herodas, *Mimiamb* 1; Hunter (1996, 110-6) explores the relationship between comedy, mime and *Idyll* 14, focusing on New Comedy and Menander.
[24] Rosenmeyer (1969, 14-5).
[25] Sens (2019, 341) discusses the characteristics of Asclepiades' epigrams; Degani *et al.* (2006): 'It is no coincidence that there occasionally appear short scenes of dialogue from everyday life (with questions, exclamations and responses), which consume the whole poem that then bears all the hallmarks of a miniature mime (5,181; 185; cf. Posidippus, *Anth. Pal.* 5,183).'

the striking reference to the epigrammist Anyte in the opening lines of *Idyll* 1.[26] Epigram-style was something that infuses Theocritus' work, and as we see from Asclepiades the literary exchange was mutual. We should not forget either that some twenty-four epigrams are attributed to Theocritus, and so he too was aware of the capabilities of this art-form. This makes all the more significant his own references, explicit and implicit, to other authors of epigram, because they mark the influence of the contemporary Hellenistic craft of composing epigram. Therefore drama, mime and epigram are overlaid by one another in Hellenistic literature.

As with all Hellenistic poetry, there is always an enmeshing of different literary genres, and in the case of Theocritus *Idylls* we can see the influences of comic drama and mime, and Hellenistic epigram. Evina Sistakou's recent 2016 monograph *Tragic Failures: Alexandrian Responses to Tragedy and the Tragic* contains a chapter on the tragic dramatic features evident in Theocritus' *Idylls,* and which touches upon the influence of the performance-based genre of tragedy across Theocritus' work. Most interestingly for our discussion of mime and Theocritus is Sistakou's analysis of *Idyll* 2 which draws parallels between Simaetha and Medea, noting the former: 'has a tragic side to her'.[27] We can compare this to Acosta-Hughes' recent analyses of Callimachus, and especially his epigrams in connection with tragedy to see how the influence of tragedy permeates Hellenistic literature.[28] However, it is important to remember that we have a huge gap in our knowledge of tragedy from the Hellenistic period, and particularly the Pleiad tragedians, a group of influential Hellenistic tragedians whose work is extant only in fragments. These have been presented in a recent edition by Agnieszka Kotlińska-Toma (2006; 2015), providing the means for a richer discussion of Hellenistic tragedy in the context of other Hellenistic authors, but much of the work of situating the Pleiad alongside Theocritus still waits to be done.

Overall we can say that there are detectable qualities and features of mime and drama that infiltrate a large number of Theocritus' *Idylls*. Most significant to this point is the fact that both mime and drama are performance-rooted genres, and both have a literary afterlife that co-exists with their continued development in performance. This is observable in the Hellenistic period and on into the Roman. It is therefore important to note that while we are concerned with mime in relation to Theocritus, by exploring the four characteristics listed above (urban setting, everyday content, focus on character and female voices), this can never be viewed in isolation from the influence and effects of comic drama, tragic or epigram. The overlap between comic drama and mime is particularly strong, not only due to their mode of performance, but also as seen in the socioeconomic status of its characters and their informal, everyday interactions and discourse. Comedy and mime have more in common than is consciously acknowledged in scholarship. Therefore, again, the issue arises of how we sufficiently isolate the influence of mime specifically.

[26] E.g. Hunt (2017, 96) addresses the influence of the poet Anyte and her epigrams on Theocritus, *Idyll* 1. Both use the theme of sweetness: ἡδύ (*hedu*) and Theocritus opens his programmatic poem with it. Anyte's focus on herdsmen is thought to be unique within the epigram tradition up to that point.
[27] Sistakou (2016, 133-9).
[28] Acosta-Hughes (2012, 392-6).

It is clear that Theocritus' *Idylls* are composed in such a way that they purposefully enmesh layers of historical and contemporary culture and literature; to try and unpick each layer is to unravel Theocritus. And yet there is a balance to be had here. For, the more we gain an understanding of what each of these different layers contributes to Theocritus, the more we can engage with his uniquely Hellenistic art-form: the *Idylls* and their relationship with contemporary and earlier art-forms, such as mime.

C. Theocritus, Mime and Sophron: The Syracusan Connection

There is a notable difference between the mimes of the 5th c. BCE poet Sophron and the Hellenistic *Idylls* of Theocritus in that the former were apparently composed in rhythmic prose, the latter in hexameters. Similarly the *Mimiambs* of Herodas are also metrical, though they are in iambics. Therefore, the relationship of these two Hellenistic authors who draw on mime is anything but straightforward. Nonetheless, these two contemporary Hellenistic authors, engaging with mime and responding to it metrically, mark a significant moment in the history of our understanding of mime.

Sophron's connection with Theocritus is intriguing because Sophron was, like Theocritus, a Syracusan who composed in Doric dialect, and we can only wish we had better information on the connections between the two authors. The ancient scholia linked *Idylls* 2 and 15 directly to Sophron's mimes, and the genealogical, ethnic and artistic connections between Sophron and Theocritus may suggest that these *Idylls* hold a stronger biographical, personal connection for Theocritus. A similar case can be made for Theocritus' connection with the Syracusan comic poet, Epicharmus (discussed in Section B), but as with Sophron we lack the textual evidence to explore these links fully. Nonetheless, Theocritus' connection to Epicharmus is hinted at elsewhere in Theocritus' work, if the authenticity of Theocritus, *Epigram* 18 (= *AP* 9.600) is accepted, which is an epigram for Epicharmus. Even if this is not an original work by Theocritus, it points to an understanding of the close relationship between these two Syracusan authors.[29]

By using a formal frame that draws on mime and comedy connected to Theocritus' roots in Syracuse, Theocritus can deploy a creative strategy that enables him to relay a fictional image of the contemporary Hellenistic world in which he lived, and that engages with his own Syracusan heritage. This in itself adds a personal creative touch to these *Idylls* that connects Theocritus with both Hellenistic present and his inherited poetic past. In this sense, Theocritus' *Idylls* overall are remarkable for their interest in artistic genealogies and inter-relationships, rather than a more restrictive interest in genre affiliations and formations in individual *Idylls*. The interweaving of mime and comedy forms an important part of this, and the influence of Epicharmus and Sophron is key. Indeed, this throws further significance onto *Idylls* 4 and 5 (see Section B) for their mimetic and comic qualities, because both *Idylls* have a South Italian setting.

[29] On *Epigram* 18 see Rossi (2001, 287-93).

Therefore, Theocritus' relationship with mime is complex, and it is complicated by two further factors: firstly, very little mime survives, and in the case of Sophron we have only fragments, now presented in the excellent commentary and Loeb edition by James Hordern (2004).[30] Secondly, Theocritus engages both with Sophron and historical mime alongside contemporary Hellenistic mime, which is equally fragmentary. This engagement with the contemporary and historical is a hallmark of how scholars choose to understand Hellenistic literature, but in the case of Theocritus and mime, our partial knowledge of the form further shapes the way that scholarship engages with Theocritus and mime.

Hordern's 2004 critical edition and commentary on Sophron has played a key role in promoting and enhancing our knowledge of Sophron and mime. And yet, we are in that frustrating situation where Theocritus had access to the mimes of Sophron and the comedies of Epicharmus in composing his poetry, whereas we are left to infer much of our knowledge of mime from fragments, and secondary sources, one of which is Theocritus himself. This not only creates circularity in interpretation of mime and Theocritus' mime, but it is important to realise the gaps in our knowledge of mime, in contrast to the wealth of knowledge that Theocritus would have possessed, and presumably some of his audience too.[31] In short, mime was a key source for Theocritus, but we lack access to that source. Therefore, our attempts to interpret, understand and situate the mimes of Theocritus within his wider work will always be frustrated and frustrating to some degree.

Nonetheless, there are some tantalising glimpses as to the power and influence of mime in the periods surrounding Theocritus. Our ancient sources provide vital hints of this power and its continuing influence into the 4th c. BCE. Indeed, Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a-b even marks out the mimes of Sophron alongside Socratic dialogues as examples of works that have not been categorized: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν ἔχοιμεν ὀνομάσαι κοινὸν ('for we would not be able to give them a common name'). Aristotle continues by noting that this is in contrast with poetry where everything in verse is named according to its *metre* (e.g. elegy or epic), and the poets are not grouped together in accordance with their *mimesis* κατὰ τὴν μίμησιν (representation). The influence of Sophron is felt across literary genres, including Platonic dialogue, which no doubt used and adapted the rhythmic prose of Sophron. The synthesis of their styles of dialogue and mime alongside comic drama is reflected in the anecdote that Plato kept a copy of Sophron under his pillow (Diogenes Laertius 3.18), which again indicates the continuing high status of Sophron through the 4th c. BCE, and in the period directly preceding the works of Theocritus and Herodas. Again we see the connection of the prose mime of Sophron and prose dialogue form developed by Plato.[32] So, from the *Idylls* of Theocritus

[30] Cf. Sophron was first added to a Loeb in 2002 by Jeffrey Rusten and Ian Cunningham to their edition on Herodas' *Mimiambs* and Theophrastus' *Characters*, both of which have had a significant effect on how we view mime, Sophron and its relationship to subsequent literary genres. This occurred not long before Cunningham's own critical edition of Herodas (2004).

[31] The difficulties over identifying evidence for mime reaches even into visual culture, where the form and function of so-called grotesque figurines as possible depictions of mime remains a contentious issue, as recently summarised by Masséglia (2015, Appendix 1: 317-8).

[32] Hunter (1999, 11) further notes Diogenes Laertius 3.37, citing Aristotle who remarks that Plato's dialogues lie: 'between poetry and prose': μεταξὺ ποιήματος εἶναι καὶ πεζοῦ λόγου.

through to Aristotle's intriguing remark, down to Diogenes Laertius in the 3rd CE, we see forged a link between Sophron, mime, mimetic art, prose art and the Platonic dialogue form. All of these authors, prior to Diogenes Laertius, were available to Theocritus as a source for his own *Idylls*. However, it is a defining feature of the *Idylls* that they are each and every one in hexameter verse, a point that is in itself remarkable, but more so when we place the *Idylls* in their Hellenistic context alongside the *Mimiambs* of Herodas.

D. Metrical Mime and Female Voices: Theocritus and the *Mimiambs* of Herodas

Theocritus' choice to move the rhythmic prose of mime into the hexametric rhythm of his *Idylls* marks a key distinction between the *Idylls* and mime. This is a purposeful choice by our Hellenistic poet, but at the same time it differentiates Theocritus from his contemporary Herodas, whose *Mimiambs*, as the name suggests, are an open hybrid form of mime and iambic poetry. However, the *Mimiambs* use the iambic metres identified with Hipponax. Therefore, both Theocritus and Herodas made the same conscious decision to turn the rhythmic prose of mime into metrical mime, but notably each Hellenistic poet uses different metres: Herodas the iambics of Hipponax, and Theocritus the hexameter of epic poetry, and particularly of Homer. A full-scale comparison of Herodas and Theocritus, particularly with regard to their engagement with mime is still lacking, but there have been various individual articles and chapters that place the two authors in juxtaposition.[33]

The independent choices of Theocritus and Herodas tell us something of the open approaches that these Hellenistic poets felt able to make to the earlier traditional art-form of mime. It is noteworthy too that the rhythmic prose of mime was not felt to be aligned with only one metrical form, but rather mime appears to have contained the flexibility to combine with other performative art-forms. This also tells us that Theocritus and Herodas were aiming for individual and different effects in terms of the audial impact of their works and the implications of tones and resonances with past poetry. Nonetheless, scholarship on Herodas faces the same debates over whether, and how, the *Mimiambs* of Herodas were performed, just as we earlier discussed in relation to mime and Theocritus. This strongly suggests that the problem lies in our poor comprehension of mime as well as our pre-conceptions about the literary sophistication of Hellenistic poetry, as if that were to preclude performative sophistication.[34]

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[33] The richest comparisons of the two are by Chesterton (2016, 184-8) who compares Herodas, *Mimiamb* 4 & Theocritus *Id.* 15; Zanker (2009, 32-9) argues that Herodas has used Theocritus 2, 14, 15 in constructing his own first *Mimiamb*, and Zanker suggests 'Herodas as the debtor' (p. 36). However, the evidence for this is not compelling. Kutzko (2008, 142) argues that Theocritus and Herodas imitate comic metatheatre: 'simulating dramatic effects in a non-dramatic context', a position he reiterates in connection with Herodas (Kutzko 2018, 160). Hunter (1993, 39-44) provides a more nuanced view that Theocritus pays more attention to scenic detail which emphasises the constructedness and fictionality of the context, whereas Herodas provides fewer details for the scene. Cf. Ypsilanti (2006). Fantuzzi in Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004, 33) asserts that Herodas employed much more dramatisation than Theocritus, and such an assertion warrants a fuller investigation.

[34] See Section A above. On the literary and performative quality of Herodas see Chesterton (2016, 170-1). Chesterton astutely observes that scholars cannot decide whether a text allows for performance, or just

The effect of epic hexameter in *Idylls* 2, 14, 15, which draw most notably on mime, has been interpreted as creating a stark distinction between form and content: between epic form, high tone and the low bawdy content of mime, particularly where direct links are drawn to Homer. This can be seen in *Idyll* 14 as Aeschinas employs two Homeric similes in their native hexameter but in the context of discussing his love-life and failed relationship with Cynisca.[35] In addition *Idyll* 14 employs a large number of proverbs, hallmarks of mime (see Section A above) alongside potential affiliations with New Comedy, as discussed by Hunter.[36] This unique fusion also adds to the effect of treating this epic-sounding *Idyll* in a dramatic style with its roots in mime. And, as we saw in Section C, this has distinctly Syracusan origins that form a personal link to Theocritus. So, Theocritus has produced something with Syracusan roots, but which was a distinct and unique cultural product of the early Hellenistic world. In this way Theocritus creates a wholly Hellenistic form of cultural memory for Greeks across the Hellenistic world, and this is distinguished by its memorable, unique sound and rhythm, as relayed in performance.

The mixture of epic tone, mimic form and contemporary context mixes past and present worlds that are fictional, mythical and artistic representations of actual Hellenistic life. This is an aspect of Theocritus' *Idylls* that Joan Burton's 1995 monograph, *Theocritus's Urban Mimes. Mobility, Gender, and Patronage,* admirably addresses: 'The mixed, open texture of Theocritus's urban mimes (which could include, e.g., song, hymn, and street talk) was especially well-suited for representing a heterogeneous world, with its mix of old and new, native and immigrant, ordinary and privileged, everyday and fantastic.'[37] We see these effects at work, for example at *Idyll* 15.61-2 where an old woman responds to Gorgo's inquiry about entering the palace by noting that the Achaeans took Troy by trying. Greek epic and mime of the past here collide with Hellenistic present as the two women, citizens of Alexandria, Syracusans by heritage are placed in the role of Greeks taking Troy as they enter the Royal Palace in Alexandria.

The vibrancy, vitality and variety in these *Idylls* should not be in doubt, and this is due to the unique juxtaposition that Theocritus creates through using the performance arts of mime, comedy and epic. Equally, we should not forget that Herodas' *Mimiambs* also engage closely with Homeric epic, and not just via their use of hexameter.[38] This adds a particular level to Theocritus' engagement with mime because we see the tension between epic model and

encourages one to imagine a performance, see e.g. Esposito (2010), Zanker (2009); Kutzko (2008); Hunter (1993).

[35] *Idyll* 14 twice refers to Homer's *Iliad: Idyll* 14.31-3 and *Iliad* 16.7-10; *Idyll* 14.39-42 and *Iliad* 9.323-7, upon which Hunter (1996, 114) draws out the distinction between past and present worlds: 'In a poem which speaks of the place of the soldier in a contemporary world, the evocation of the *Iliad* makes clear what has changed.' Cf. Hutchinson (1988, 200) who focuses on the contrast of literary tone: 'We may surely suppose that in these poems [Idylls 2, 14, 15], and to a lesser degree in others, the associations with a lowly form of literature on the one hand, and on the other the dignity which must still attach to the hexameter, will enhance the interplay of the base and sordid with the grand and intense.'

[36] Hunter (2014, 70).

[37] Burton (1995, 9).

[38] E.g. Zanker (2009, 34) notes *Mimiamb* 1 is filled with Homeric allusions in the depiction of Gyllis.

contemporary present played out through the sound and rhythm of these *Idylls,* and such effects are best rendered and appreciated in live-performance.

One of the most notable characteristics of *Idylls* 2 and 15 is the focus on constructing female voices, female presence, expression and thought. These are the two *Idylls* which, as noted in Section A, the ancient scholia connect with the mimes of Sophron. They are also the only two *Idylls* where female voices hold centre-stage throughout, and this has drawn scholarly attention, e.g. Valeria Pace (2017) who provides a much-needed discussion of female voices in these *Idylls*, building on the work of Joan Burton (1995). Notably, in Herodas' *Mimiambs* too we see numerous female-only scenes. In particular there are striking parallels between Theocritus, *Idyll* 15 and Herodas, *Mimiamb* 4 in which Cynno and Coccale travel from home to the Asclepion. Marilyn Skinner's important discussion of *Idyll* 15 and Herodas, *Mimiamb* 4 reveals the richness of these works when situated in the context of Erinna, Anyte and Nossis, who potentially drew on conventions from 5th c. Greek tragedy in presenting the female gaze.[39] Again we see analysis of Theocritus and Herodas must draw on multiple genres and multiple authors.

The depiction of these female voices is not unlike the comic scenes witnessed in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae, Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae* in which the female-only space is viewed through the comic lens of the male Aristophanes directed towards a receptive and largely male audience. However, the key difference between Athenian comedy and Syracusan mime, is that in mime the performers were female, whereas in comedy they were male in female costume. In comedy the female characters are enacted through the male body in performance, but this was not the case for mime. The artificial and constructed female identity of comedy is one that the Greek comedies play with on a metatheatrical level, as witnessed in the frequent use of costume change and disguise in comic drama. This makes all the more notable the conscious choice on the part of Theocritus and Herodas to engage actively with mime as a source, and not just comedy when depicting female figures. In the case of Theocritus this adds to the constructed realism of *Idylls* 2 and 15 precisely because the imagined performers were real females, not males in female garb.

Theocritus harnesses a different aspect of constructed realism of mime in *Idylls* 14 and 15 by exploiting the ability of mime to focus on character portrayal as developing a connection between the character and the audience to build in praise to Ptolemaic rule (as noted in Section A). Notably this use of mime is distinct from the *Mimiambs* of Herodas, and as such it shows one of the features that mime offered Theocritus, and which gives important hints as to Theocritean aesthetics at work. *Idylls* 14 and 15 start off with an everyday setting, familiar character-types and human problems, which is then unexpectedly brought round to compliments of the power structures above and to those in power: Ptolemy and Arsinoe. In *Idyll* 15 Theocritus has spent the first part of the *Idyll* using techniques from mime to create realistic, believable, fallible and therefore sympathetic characters, with whom the audience can identify as knowing someone a bit like them, whether you laugh at them, empathise with them or loathe them. Therefore, the frame of mime, with its focus on character depiction

[39] Skinner (2001, 202-11).

helps to provide the means to create the most reliable, and therefore trustworthy eye-witnesses to the events that they see, and which ends in a favourable image of Ptolemaic rule. The same technique is at work in *Idyll* 14 where the *Idyll* starts with Thyonichus lending a sympathetic ear to Aeschinas' relationship troubles and his violent character, circumstances that are all too familiar in life. And yet, by the end of the *Idyll* the praise is for Ptolemy's relationship with his people as ruler, as a lover, as a fellow Greek of upstanding character and of course – most significantly for Theocritus' *Idyll* – as φιλόμουσος ('a muse-loving man'). In both of these cases, mime offers a refractive lens through which to view and focus attention on Ptolemaic power in a way that appears to come through the language, the culture and the eyes of the 'everyday' Alexandrians, the contemporaries of the audience of these poems. This is a tactic to popularise Ptolemy, or perhaps rather to harness his popularity and to preserve, enhance and maintain it for future generations. In this regard mime serves as the perfect vehicle given its roots in popular performance.

E. Theocritus, and reception: Are some *Idylls* more 'idyllic' than others?

There is one further aspect of what mime means as a category in Theocritus' work that we need to address in order to understand earlier scholarly approaches to mime in Theocritus and to *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 in particular. This relates to the distinction that scholars have traditionally drawn between the Bucolic *Idylls* of Theocritus and *Idylls* 2, 14, 15. However, all thirty of the extant *Idylls* ascribed to Theocritus have the identical name: *Idylls* εἰδύλλια (*eidullia*), which one could translate as: 'formlets; figurines; little images', although I would choose: 'snapshots' for the way the word relays the idea of a live-action human being captured in an artistic compositional event, while drawing attention to the visual connotation of the Greek (εἰδ-). While the scholia use this term εἰδύλλια, its origin is unknown, and *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 were not known as mimes by Theocritus. Rather the concept of an 'urban mime of Theocritus' is a post-Theocritean label, which acknowledges the variety of subject-matters, styles and influences at play in the Theocritean corpus as a whole. This label of 'urban mime' is one that I discounted at the start of the Chapter for the restrictions it placed on analysing Theocritus' relationship with mime. Indeed, it is also to the ancient commentators on Theocritus whose *scholia* survive today that we owe the first designation of the features of ancient mime to some of the *Idylls* of Theocritus. And, it is subsequent scholarship, through to our own time that has chosen to preserve this categorisation, and to mark out *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 as distinct from the better-known Bucolic poetry of Theocritus.

This is in no small part due to the influential reception that Theocritus' work underwent in antiquity, and one that subsequent historical periods have maintained. This has privileged certain of Theocritus' *Idylls,* often classed as his bucolic poems, which went on to inspire and create the poetic tradition of Bucolic poetry that was continued directly by Moschus (also from Syracuse), and Bion (from Smyrna, Asia Minor), and then immortalised in Virgil's *Eclogues* (c. 40 BCE). In fact, the role of Virgilian poetry and its reception in later poetic traditions has been pivotal, firstly in the development of the bucolic tradition after Theocritus, secondly in

how we look at Theocritus' poetry, and last, but by no means least: *on what we look to his poetry for*.[40] So, the popularity of Virgil has weighed heavily on Theocritus, and on the study of Theocritus.[41] The unintended consequence of this is that the poems that do not fit this bucolic picture received less attention. In the case of the role of mime in Theocritus the shift of focus onto mime did not take place until the late 20th c. with the monographs of Joan Burton and Richard Hunter, and subsequently the work of particularly Graham Zanker on Herodas (2004, 2009), and the work on Sophron's mime (Hordern 2002, 2004; Rusten & Cunningham 2014). But there is still lacking a systematic study of Theocritus' relationship with mime and drama across the *Idylls.*

So, Theocritus is more than the sum of his parts. He is a poetic whole in his own right, and deserves not to be treated in such a fragmentising manner by scholars pre-1990s, just because we possess partial information about some of his artistic sources, such as Sophron, Epicharmus and New Comedy, and even less information about many of his contemporaries, including Anyte, Asclepiades, the elegiac poet Hermesianax and their predecessor Philitas. Theocritus is a classic case of how the extant evidence dictates the modes of our study into his poetry to such a degree that it shapes our very definition of what is an *Idyll* of Theocritus, and more generally what the aesthetics of Theocritus entail. This results in a distortion, and a critical distortion, that does unequal justice to the ingenuity of Theocritean poetry in its own right.

F. Conclusion: Theocritus, Mime and the Power of Performance

Mimes are a curious form, hard to define, and poorly attested. Our partial knowledge of them shows that they offer an imitation of human behaviour based on human interactions in urban and rural human-created environments. This is in contrast to the natural, wild, outside world of the countryside, and this divide between urban and countryside is one that Theocritus exploits in numerous of his *Idylls.* Theocritus' *Idylls* 2, 14, 15 take the time to create setting, character, tone and metre that relay a fictional image of the urban environment, the contemporary Hellenistic ('everyday') life, by focusing on presenting character rather than plot, and in the case of *Idylls* 2 and 15: giving the active voice to a variety of female protagonists.

Theocritus draws on the conventions of performance-based arts to bring his *Idylls* alive, including mime, comic and tragic drama and epigram, with which Theocritus can signal particular modes and styles of performance. What is interesting about *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 is

[40] E.g. for a sense of changing categorisations see Longinus *On the Sublime* 33.4, who compares Homer with Apollonius and Theocritus, by treating the titles of the two works in parallel: *Bucolica* and *Argonautica.*

[41] A symptom of this problem is seen in scholars applying the standard label "non-Bucolic" to various of Theocritus' *Idylls*, including, but no limited to, *Idylls* 2, 14, 15: e.g. Hunter (1999, 27): 'In the Eclogues Virgil echoes the spurious Idylls 8 and 9 and 'non-bucolic' poems such as Idylls 2 and 17'. Damien Nelis' review of Hunter (1996) classes 2, 14 and 15 as 'non-Bucolic' (Nelis 1999, 185); J. Andrew Foster's entry: 'Theocritus of Syracuse' in *Oxford Bibliographies* distinguishes between Bucolic and 'Non-Bucolic' *Idylls* in order to classify scholarship on Theocritus prior to 2009, and this inevitably has a hand in shaping how we approach future research (Foster 2009; entry last reviewed 2013).

the degree to which they draw actively and openly on mime, when mime is an art-form rooted in the Syracusan 5th c. poet Sophron. The potential effects that Theocritus could harness through using mime are what we have addressed in this chapter: namely the use of the urban, the contemporary, human ("everyday") setting, character and language, the very focus on character rather than plot development, and the focus on female voices in *Idylls* 2 and 15.

By considering mime and Theocritus alongside each other, we have seen that it is the complexity of human intercourse, human interaction and human emotion that instils these *Idylls* of Theocritus with their power. Mime, with its roots in performance, its origins in Syracuse, where Theocritus' own family comes from, and its unique ability to have female performers appear in female role, all work to bring *Idylls* 2, 14 and 15 very much down to earth for the Hellenistic audience and forge a close contemporary connection between them, their poet and the world of the characters within the *Idylls*. The audience becomes almost a participant, grounded in the event of these *Idylls* by being placed as one experiencing a mime through their role as audience member. This forms a unique bond between audience and *Idyll*, as it enacts the bond created between performer and audience-member at a live performance. This is the art of Theocritus, and indeed Herodas: to take the performative essence of mime, and the unique bond of performer and audience and transpose that into their own art-forms alongside a range of contemporary and historical cultural influences, from mime, to epigram to drama, iambic and epic. In this way the depiction of human life and art in Theocritus' *Idylls* is its most important and unifying qualities, and the art-form of mime contributes to making the humanity of the *Idylls* more powerful and vibrant than it has hitherto been given credit for.[42]

[42] Indeed, what would benefit scholarship is an up-to-date comparison of mime in Herodas and Theocritus that takes account of the work achieved in recent commentaries on mime, Herodas and Theocritus. There is also a need to explore the relationship of mime to drama, to comedy and tragedy, not just in terms of origins and developments, but also in terms of shared themes, performance strategies, and their reception. There is equally plenty of scope to engage with theories of popular culture in trying to understand the role of mime, the everyday, the real and the graphic depictions of human behaviour that we find in Theocritus' work, and even more in Herodas. But hopefully this chapter has shown most of all that *Idylls* 2, 14, 15 each warrant, as much as they merit, an up-to-date critical edition and commentary. Attention to all of these matters will shape our idea and understanding of mime and its place in the *Idylls* of Theocritus.